

English Language Grammar
for
College Students

(A Lexical - Functional Approach)

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Title	page
INTRODUCTION	1
UNIT ONE: PARTS OF SPEECH	5
Introductory Remarks	5
Lesson 1 PARTS OF SPEECH: VERBS	10
Lesson 2 PARTS OF SPEECH: ADVERBS	34
Lesson 3 PARTS OF SPEECH: NOUNS	56
Lesson 4 PARTS OF SPEECH: ADJECTIVES	75
UNIT TWO: SEMANTIC VARIATIONS	107
Lesson 5 AUXILIARY VERBS	107
UNIT THREE: VERBALS: INFINITIVES AND GERUNDS	177
Introductory Remarks	177
Lesson 6 VERBALS: INFINITIVES	178
Lesson 7 VERBALS: GERUNDS	213
UNIT FOUR: STRUCTURAL VARIATIONS	243
Lesson 8 I) AMBIGUITY IN ENGLISH	243
II) DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SIMILAR SENTENCES	261
UNIT FIVE: BEAUTIES OF VERBAL EXPRESSIONS	267
Lesson 9 SOME COMMON ENGLISH PROVERBS	267
Lesson 10 SOME IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH	301
UNIT SIX: THE CONFUSABLES	319
Introductory Remarks	319
Lesson 11 WORDS OFTEN CONFUSED	320
Lesson 12 VOCABULARY PRACTICE	358

Title	page
APPENDICES	401
Appendix 1 SOME PREFIXES AND THEIR MEANINGS	402
Appendix 2 SOME ROOTS AND THEIR MEANINGS	404
Appendix 3 SOME SUFFIXES AND THEIR MEANINGS	408
Appendix 4 IRREGULAR VERBS	412
REFERENCES	422

INTRODUCTION

In 2002 a book of mine, bearing the title of *English Language Grammar for College Students*, came onto the market. The book, had been written at the request of The Center for Studying and Compiling University Books in Humanities (SAMT), affiliated to the Ministry of Technology and Higher Education, Tehran (Iran), and was intended to meet the English majors' needs for English language grammar, an eight-credit course, while doing their B.A. Degrees in English Language and Literature, Translation Studies, and Teacher Education. Having consulted a dozen of English language grammar books at the outset of the task, I came up with a list of topics to be included in my presumptive book. The treatment of the selected topics took up many more pages than the SAMT had conceded to publish; therefore, I had to disregard at least one-third of the content I had written - the part that is now incorporated in this volume.

Generally speaking, the 1st volume deals with the syntax of English grammar; the 2nd volume is mostly concerned with parts of speech, namely the noun, adjective, verb, and adverb. To add some relish to the content of the 2nd volume, with an eye to helping L2 student enhance his general competence in English language, I have devoted four more chapters to the discussion of a) ambiguous sentences, b) some idiomatic expressions, c) common Proverbs in English, and d) words often confused. In my search for both the idiomatic expressions and proverbs I had in mind to select the ones that easily recall to mind their Farsi equivalents; i.e. the ones that cut across cultural idiosyncrasies, hence universal. I have seen to it that the four new chapters will have an adequate number of exercises in a bid to help the learner assimilate the subject matter so that whenever the occasion arises for him to communicate in English he, relieved of conscious controlling his verbal

performance, will be able to attend to the meanings he intends to express.

Speaking from my own language learning experience, I can assuredly posit the view that when the language learner in verbal interaction — either spoken or oral — join me in completing my unfinished idiomatic phrases, similes, proverbs; for example, *She has butterflies in her ...; He is a wolf in ...; or as blind as a ...; Eagles do not catch ...; They that dance must pay ...*, my prompt reaction would be to acknowledge the L2 learner's expertise in English language. The fact is that you, having taken the floor, cannot wear out your welcome if you know how to render your performance palatable, how to interlard your speech with witty remarks. Never do we claim that by studying grammar you can accomplish your speaking and writing tasks beautifully and fluently. Knowledge of grammar will help the language learner to be accurate in his/her verbal performance as required by language system. To improve language behavior, the learner needs to be exposed to authentic texts representing language in its natural contexts. The broader the context of the use, the greater is the learner's catch - *All is fish that comes to the net*, as an English proverb says.

Without doubt, both accuracy and fluency are needed in language use. To sacrifice one for the other will disfigure the image. Grammar helps the L2 learner to perform verbal tasks accurately, the knowledge of which is not hard to achieve, but to be able to act out beautifully as a native speaker and writer does in the target language one needs to have read a lot of literary texts — English stories and novels, written by big names in the field, and to have taken in their ways of expressing their feelings and thoughts. Mind that the subtleties of language behavior do not submit to the conventional rules of language system treated fully in grammar books. To be able to exhibit a native-like language behavior is a time-consuming process, only achieved by the L2 learner who is highly motivated and persevering in his/her effort — the trait that few L2 learners can boast possessing it.

I may Presume on the patience of the reader to add that the mastery of

language system - **linguistic competence** should be complemented with language behavior - **communicative competence**. While the first can be attained through formal instruction usually in a classroom setting, the latter is realized through communication in natural settings of verbal interaction, and since this is not available in FEL situations, the L2 learner will be well advised to take up a simulated approach to the problem, i.e. to get immersed in the interaction realized in literary texts which are representations of people's vicarious experiences and verbalizations.

In a nutshell, there are two sides to the mastery of English as a foreign language – one side is marked with usage, and the other one with uses. To be able to use language appropriately, one needs to have acquired linguistic rules governing communicative uses; to know the rules without being able to put them to proper uses will defeat the purpose. *After all, birds never flew on one wing.*

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